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To

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OF

Densford in Berkshire.

On the noble stand, which the Magistrates of that county have made in behalf of the Reformers, who have been put into dungeons under the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act ; and on other matters relating to the desperate state of the Boroughmongers.

North Hampstead, Long Island,  
October 3, 1817.

No, no ! my dear Sir, "those happy hours," of which you have spoken to my daughter, are *not* "gone never to return!" They are to return ; and I shall again and again sit and laugh with you at the follies of the at once stupid and malignant men who vainly imagine, that they are able to subdue for ever the spirit of Englishmen. "Sand and Salt," Solomon says, "are heavy, but a *fool's* wrath is heavier than both." This is the sort of wrath, under which England is now suffering ; but, as in all similar cases, its effect will finally recoil on the pates of the fools themselves.

I have English papers to no later date than the 25th of July. From the

month of May to that period, the affairs of the Boroughmongers appear to me to have been any thing but prosperous. Their attempt to make the timid and the rich believe, that there was a real Jacobin Revolution on foot, has completely failed ; but, they have not failed in exciting an alarm, in many of those people, that, in the end, a military despotism will put all upon a level who are not actually of the Boroughmongering crew. Hence friend SHEPHERD, of *Stamp-Office* renown, has found himself *lurched* by the *juries* ; while the Doctor has been wholly demolished by his own *Spies*. You used to think the Doctor "a good sort of a man." What do you think of him now ? Do you not think, that Fox knew him better than you did ?

The Boroughmongers have received several very severe blows, within the last four months. It was curious to observe how several Members of both Houses drew (if they will allow the use of a vulgar figure) their necks out of the halter, at the renewal of the Absolute power-of-imprisonment Bill. I will stop here a minute to observe, that I call this the Absolute-power-of-Imprisonment Bill, because, to call it a *Habeas Corpus suspension Bill*, is a description wholly inadequate. It is injurious to truth also, to give to the Bill this latter appellation. This Bill does, indeed, wholly suspend and destroy the benefits of the act of *Habeas Corpus* ; but, it also suspends, and wholly destroys for the time, all the

ancient *laws of the land*, emphatically so called, because they have grown up there with the English nation, and because they are no where written but in the hearts of the People, who enjoy them from their ancestors of right, and of right as perfect as they enjoy the blood that runs in their veins. All these laws are now abolished, as far as relate to the safety of men's persons ; for, if any part of the nation can take upon them to cause whom they please to be shut up in dungeons at their pleasure ; if any part of the nation can cause your person, for instance, to be placed at the sole mercy of Castlereagh and Sidmouth, why shall not another part of the nation, whether it be six, two, or one, have a right to come and take away your horses or your sheep ? Yet this is still called *robbery*, though it would be an act much less atrocious than that of seizing your person and shutting you up in a dungeon. The Act of *Habeas Corpus* is, as you well know, an Act of Modern date, and that it only became necessary, because judges had violated the ancient laws of the land. This act of *Habeas Corpus* has been called a second *Magna Charta* ; and it is of great importance ; but it is of importance only as it serves to explain more clearly what was the law of the land before, and as it points out more precisely the remedy in cases of violation or neglect of that law. Those who have passed the *Absolute-power-of Imprisonment Act* do not call it *an act to suspend the Act of Habeas Corpus*. That would not have answered their purpose. They call it an act to empower His Majesty

to imprison any person whom he may SUSPECT to be guilty of treason, or treasonable practices. That is to say, as the act afterwards declares, that his Ministers may imprison people upon such grounds. So that, here is all the law of protection totally destroyed at once. It is very material that we keep in our eye this view of the matter ; because, to set aside the whole of the law of the land, is a very different thing indeed from the suspension of an Act of Parliament. And, besides, men might be apt to reason thus : As the Parliament could *make* a law, it might not be so very unreasonable to suppose that they could *suspend* that law, without any daring and atrocious attack upon the liberties of the country. Men might be apt to reason in this way, if we were content to call the present Act, an act to suspend the *Habeas Corpus*. Therefore, it is necessary for us to keep constantly in our view that the present Act, giving to the Ministers the absolute power of imprisonment, has destroyed, for the present, at least, all the ancient law of the land settled by our ancestors for the protection and safety of men's persons, and that as long as this act shall continue in force, there is no law for the protection of any man's person ; except, indeed, of those precious persons who have passed this act, they having taken care, not to subject themselves to those perils to which they have subjected every other person in the kingdom, man, woman and child, not excepting the Queen and her daughters, and not excepting the Princess Charlotte herself. SWANN and TEED and CAWTHORNE

and WALSH, (he may be still in Parliament,) and CROKER and HUSKISSON; these are excepted from this sweeping and desolating Act; but the Princess Charlotte is not! I made remarks somewhat of this kind in my Register of the tenth of June last, in my first letter to my friends, GOLDSMITH and HINXMAN; and, I was pleased to observe that Sir Francis Burdett was in the House of Commons, making similar remarks much about the same time. He saw the importance of removing from the minds of the people the idea that this was merely a suspension of the Act of Habeas Corpus. There is no man that understands the laws of the land better than he does. He saw that this cheat was of great importance; that it served the Boroughmongers essentially; and, he accordingly took the proper course to expose it. Let the people bear in mind, and to that end let them be continually told, that, by this act of Parliament they have had taken from them, not the benefit of a former Act of Parliament, but the benefit of all the *law of the land*, which the Parliament, which no Parliament, can have any more right to deprive them of than they can have to deprive them of the air which they breathe, or of the blood which circulates in their veins; that no Parliament can deprive them of this law of nature as well as of the land, the law of self-preservation, any more than it can have a right to prohibit them from eating or drinking, or from performing any other of the offices or functions necessary to the sustaining of life, or the preservation of health; and that, therefore, this act is a direct, clear,

unequivocal violation of the fundamental laws of the land. Let the People constantly bear this in mind; and in order that they may bear it in mind, let them be everlastingly reminded of it; and, if this be done, the nation will want no one to tell them, when a day of justice shall arrive, what is the proper measure of that justice.

From this digression, which I thought it useful to make, I return to observe, that it was curious to hear the excuses of many members in both Houses, who voted for the first Bill, and who declined to vote for the second. Some said, that they had been deceived; others said that the spirit of insubordination had been checked sufficiently; and others, that experience had shown that the Act, instead of quieting the people, had only rendered them more restless. These two last reasons were directly at war with each other on a point of fact; and, of course, one of them must have been false, whether proceeding from folly or from hypocrisy. As to the first reason, it could not be true; it was impossible for any man in his senses to be deceived. The case was as plain as it was possible to be. Proof was ready to be tendered at the bar of both houses, that the principal part of the assertions, contained in the Reports upon which the act was founded, were wholly false. The Ministers themselves furnished the evidence upon which the Reports were made. The committees founded their Reports upon that evidence. The houses saw not the evidence. But both Houses saw petitions praying for leave to produce proof upon oath, and under

all the perils of prosecution for perjury, that the principal facts stated in those Reports were false. The Houses refused to hear this evidence of the Petitioners. Is it possible, therefore that any member who voted for the Act upon the foundation of those Reports could be *deceived*? No, Sir, there was no deception in the case. But I will tell you what these gentlemen thought. They thought, that the loud demand for a Reform of the Parliament was a mere temporary ebullition; a sudden bubble-up of popular feeling produced by the blaze of the two-penny Registers; and the Houses, "in their wisdom," as Pitt used to say, thought that, by passing laws to check this blaze, the public mind would sink down again in a few months into a simmer, and from a simmer into a luke-warmth, and from that into the temperature of a stagnant pool. This was what Parliament, in "its wisdom," thought; and this thought showed how completely ignorant it was of the real state of the public mind, and of all the causes which had led a million and a half of men to demand their rights as Englishmen. O no, Sir! it is not for such men as **Lord MILTON** and the Honourable **WILLIAM LAMBE** to know any thing of cause and effect in these mighty matters. If those gentlemen, who now pretend that they were deceived at the outset, had really possessed any portion of political wisdom, they would have seen that the cause of the people's discontent was deep rooted; that it has been of long standing; that its progress to maturity, like that of the oak, had been slow, and that, therefore, it was the more firm in its nature, and the more difficult to be

removed. They would have seen that the petitions had not been, and could not have been, brought by Major **CARTWRIGHT**, Mr. **HUNT**, myself, or any other hundred or any other thousand of such persons. They would have seen, that a long enduring, a slow moving people like the English, were not to be put in motion by half a dozen two-penny Registers. These, indeed, might assist to rally, to collect together, to embody; but they could not create a feeling throughout a whole nation. They could have seen that it was really *the people* they had to contend with; and not three or four dozen of us whom they had the supreme folly to dignify with the name of deluders of the people. What means of delusion had we? What interests and connections had we in any part of the kingdom? Whence were to come our funds, or any other means? We had nothing but our own minds; our pens and our tongues (and those very much trammeled) were all that we had at our command. Supposing, then, the allegation of the Borough-mongers to be true, that it was we alone who had created the discontent, what formidable personages we must have been! And, what a poor, miserable, despicable figure did the Borough-mongers, backed by all their Funders, all their Clergy, all their Half-Pay scattered over the kingdom, all their slavish lawyers, all their innumerable taxgatherers and dependants, all their brilliant geniuses of their Universities, all their crowd of hired writers in Newspapers, Magazines, and Reviews; what a figure did they cut, when, by their desperate Acts of Parliament, they clearly acknowledged that they were wholly una-

ble to contend against a handful of men destitute of riches as well as of official power ; destitute of every thing but the resources of their own minds ; what a figure did they cut, and how humiliated (if they had had any sense of shame,) must they have appeared in their own eyes, when they found themselves compelled, in order to obtain a chance of counteracting our influence, to pass an act violating all the fundamental laws of the land ; and, in fact, appealing to the naked bayonet for protection ! Such gentlemen as Lord Milton and the honourable William Lambe do not seem to have perceived, that every word which they levelled against us tended to enhance our consequence, and to humiliate themselves. Far was it from the pompous Lord MILTON to suppose that he was sinking himself, when he was cheering the bitter Wm. ELLIOT in his attack upon what he so impudently called the "*weekly venom* ;" and for which attack, if that gentleman live many years, I will assuredly repay him. Far was it from Lord Milton to think that he was sinking himself upon this occasion. He thought, in the fulness of his pride, that we were to be frowned into silence and insignificance. So we might have been if we had not had the hearts of the people with us ; but having them most cordially on our side, we might safely then, as we do now, laugh to scorn his airs of affected superiority.

Thus then, sir, these gentlemen were deceived in reality ; not, however, as to the justice or necessity of depriving us of our liberties ; but as to the effect of their measure, and as to the cause of what they were pleased to call seditious and revolutionary intentions ; but which intentions were honestly confined to the recovering of our just, legal, and indisputable rights. They begin now, appa-

rently, to perceive, when it is too late, a little more of the real state of the matter. My Lord FITZWILLIAM and my Lord SPENCER, (two persons who are, in private life, so well worthy of our respect,) have openly drawn themselves off from the despotism. For, observe, there is no man who cannot open the dictionary against an Attorney General, and prove to the conviction of any honest jury, that England now groans under a real and absolute despotism. These noble lords have, I see, drawn themselves off. Their example has been followed by some persons of great private worth in the House of Commons. This is a symptom of defection from the cause of tyranny, which gives me ground for great and very lively hope. It is not your bed-chamber Lords and your Treasury Members that I look at. One of these men, the SPENCERS or FITZWILLIAMS, is able to do more good or more harm than a whole mob of notorious dependants. As to the GRENVILLES and WYNNS, and such-like people of yesterday, nobody expects of them any thing but that which is calculated to secure their hold upon the public purse. But from such men as Lord FITZWILLIAM and Lord SPENCER, people do expect a conduct proceeding from a deep interest in the welfare and honour of the country, independent of all private and sinister views. To work upon such men, so as to make them feel hostility towards the people and their rights, is one of the great objects of Corruption. To gain such men to her side, she must persuade them that the possession of the people's rights by the people, tends, some how or other, to the injury, not only of themselves, but of the nation at large. That it has a tendency to endanger its internal peace ; to degrade its character ; to diminish its power ; to tarnish its renown ; to vitiate the disposition of the peo-

ple ; to trouble that spirit of order, of due subordination, of profound respect for the law, and that inviolable attachment to the very name of country, for which Englishmen have, in all ages, been so famed ; and to have a proof of all of which a foreigner has only to set his foot upon our shores. Corruption must succeed in thrusting falsehoods like these into the minds of such men before she can persuade them to give their assent to an open war, such as she is now carrying on against the people of England. Their countenance to her measures is worth more to her than fifty majorities of votes ; and, therefore, when they withdraw from her, she feels like one of the late Dr. Rush's patients after a second or third visit of the lancet.

Another instance of defection from the cause of tyranny, though not to be put upon a level with the former, is that of the *Times newspaper*, the proprietor of which appears now to be as eager to expose the cruelties of the new system, as he was, in February last, to cause that very system to be introduced and established. In the calumniating of the Reformers ; in the hatching of plots and conspiracies ; in incitements to the Boroughmongers to destroy the liberties of the country, and to commit legal murders upon particular persons ; in all these, WALTER, the proprietor of the *Times newspaper*, was not exceeded even by the Renegado SOUTHEY himself. This wretched Walter, in his blood-thirsty columns, pursued the brave though unfortunate CASHMAN, whose fate brought tears from every person endued with common sensibility ; he pursued this brave, this ill-treated man, beyond even the gallows which was specially erected for his execution ! The poor fellow's hardships previous to the day of the riot ; his cares during his last awful hours about his brother and his

relations ; his manly declarations at the moment of his exit ; the undaunted courage which his last accents breathed ; the universal compassion and admiration which the whole of his conduct inspired : None of these, nor all of these put together, could, in the smallest degree, mollify the flint which is deposited in the bosom of the mercenary WALTER, who, even after the man was dead, endeavoured to deprive his memory of every particle of that justice which the spontaneous voice of humanity had declared to be his due. Yet, this very WALTER has now turned round ; has become the assailant of the measures of the Boroughmongers, and the eulogist of the Magistrates of Berkshire who have made such a noble stand against the despotism of the day.

It was the reading of this eulogy which induced me, upon this particular occasion, to address myself to you, whose sound judgment, whose ingenious mind, whose great experience, and whose unalterable attachment to the cause of freedom and Reform, would have pointed you out to me as one of those persons whose name might tend to do honour to any thing that I should be able to write ; but, whose exertions upon this occasion appeared to me to demand a particular expression of that gratitude which I feel in common with the mass of my oppressed countrymen.

It appears that the Magistrates of Berkshire, of whom you are one, and of whom, it appears, my Lord Folkestone was, upon this occasion, at the head, have verified the expectation which I expressed in my letter to Lord Sidmouth, dated on the 25th of May last. You have shown that there are still gentlemen in England, who dare obey the laws, in defiance of the Mandates of a Secretary of State. It appears that, at your quarter sessions, during this last summer, you

ordered the jailer before you, and informed him that, unless he would promise to permit the County Magistrates to visit all and every prisoner under his care, he should be dismissed from his office. It appears that the jailor expressed his sorrow for what had passed, and gave you an assurance of future good behaviour in this respect. It appears, as far as I can learn from the Newspapers, that my Lord Folkestone, was the *leader* on this occasion ; and I have the great pleasure to observe, that his Lordship has been most foully abused, upon this occasion, by that tool of corruption, Mr. Stuart of the Courier, who, from having been a tailor's runner, is now said to be a half millioner in the funds. One would think that, in this siugle instance, there was enough to convince the nobility, that there is no safety for them without the friendship of the people.

As to the affair at Reading, it has proved, that if magistrates are not the mere creatures of the Boroughmongers, they, as well as *juries*, can do a great deal in opposition to the despotism. This, I hope, is only a beginning in this course of opposition. Only let the gentlemen in five or six counties follow the example of the magistrates of Berkshire, and the business is done. The Boroughmongers, as a body, wished to prevent Reform ; but they did not, because they could not, if in their senses, desire to see a military despotism established ; because then their all must depend upon the will of the soldiers ; and when I say soldiers, I mean the private soldiers, and their non-commissioned officers ; and, shut them up in barracks as much as they please, they will never keep them in ignorance for two years, and never make them believe that it is for their own good to kill their fathers and their brothers. There are some of the men who call them-

selves nobles, whose insolence and rapacity would lead them any lengths against the people ; but, there are a large part of the proprietors and patrons of Boroughs, who must seriously regret the length to which things have already gone. They were willing to do even injustice for a few months in order to intimidate the Reformers ; but they could have had no idea of making a Revolution ; of declaring war upon the people ; of circumventing them by hired spies ; and of doing all those things for which forgiveness can never be expected to be granted. These men had no objection to arm the ADDINGTONS, the CASTLEREAGHS, the CANNINGS, the BRAGGES, the HUSKISONS, the ROSES, and the CROAKERS, with tremendous power over our liberties and lives. They might, indeed, have some misgivings of conscience in putting such power into such hands ; but never did they entertain the idea of being shoved off in the same boat, to sink or swim, with all this tag rag of trading politicians. If this thought had ever struck them ; if this disgraceful idea had ever come athwart their minds ; if to be lumped with this tag rag in the people's estimation, to run all its risks, and to share its fate ; if this had ever presented itself to their minds as the possible result of their proceedings, never should we have seen them agreeing to an act to deprive us of our liberties. If any one had at the time when Lord Fitzwilliam, or the Duke of Rutland, or any other man of that description, was about to vote for the absolute-power-of-imprisonment bill ; if any one had gone up to one of these noblemen upon one of those occasions, and had said in his ear, "Remember, " my Lord, that when you have voted for " this Bill, your Lordship will be in the " same boat with Castlereagh, Addington, " Canning, Huskisson, Bragge, Croaker, " and the Rosses, and with all the rest

" of that tribe," I am inclined to think that the noble Lord or Duke would have faltered in his voice as he pronounced the word *Content*. Yet, in the same boat they are ; I mean all those who have supported these audacious attacks upon our freedom ; and, those of them who do not take to the water and swim to the shore, must be content to take all the chances of this tag-rag crew of persecutors. Let them come back, then ; and we shall not only be willing to receive them, but to act towards them as if they had never done us wrong ; but, and mark what I now say, Sir, those who do not do this, will, if they live a few years, think themselves happy if they be not more despised than any of this tag-rag now is. They thought, that, being good and kind masters and landlords themselves, keeping great hospitality at their several mansions, respected for their private affability and generosity, the people would never suspect them of being the real and prime movers to these cruel and insolent acts ; they thought that as CANNING and CASTLEREAGH, and the rest of the tag-rag, were well paid for taking the Jailer and Jack-Ketch work upon them, and all the odium thereunto attached, they would take it upon themselves accordingly ; perform all the dirty and bloody work ; guttle, Guzzle, and strut and smile, under all the odium. But the noble Lords do not appear to have perceived that the people are no longer like the stupid cur that tears out his teeth in biting the broom stick, while he leaves unpunished and unnoticed the cruel hand that wields it. They seem not to have perceived, that the people have got a knack of tracing effects back to their causes ; and, of course, that they look upon the tag-rag as nothing more than the tools in the hands of those from whom they derive their power to imprison, persecute, and slaughter. Dis-

graceful, therefore, as these noblemen may think it ; sunk in their own eyes as they must be, at the thought of being placed on a level, and making common cause with the tag-rag ; mortifying as it must be to their pride, and appalling as it must be to their hearts, there is now but a short time left for them to decide whether they are, at any future period of their lives, to be separated from that tag-rag. It is very easy to conceive how men of high rank and enormous estates are imposed upon as to the real state of the public mind. Of men of business they see none but their stewards. The companions of their pleasures are hunters, shooters, and racers. Their mentors in politics are those who fill their seats in parliament. From such a group they gain much less real information than they would gain from their footmen and grooms if they were one day in a month to sit with these latter in their own servant's Hall. One part of the persons whom they talk with, never tell them of any thing that they do not like to hear ; and the other part have a direct interest in deceiving them. In general, their chief oracle is some money-making lawyer, who, while his tongue is employed in flattering their vanity or their pride, has an eye which never diverges so much as in one single twinkle from their purses ; this is a pretty source whence for a legislator to draw wisdom ; this is a pretty source of the materials of a nobleman's mind ! Accordingly, we often hear from the lips of such a man, sentiments so low, opinions so absurd, and we see his views of things so narrow, that we ascribe them all to a degeneracy of the order itself, without perceiving that it is the dirty lawyer, or not much more enlightened parson, that is actually speaking through the fox-hunting horn. Now and then they come out with wonderful self-complacency, with the disce-

very of a piece of knowledge that every porter in London has at his fingers' ends. We stare ; we wonder how they can regard this as something new ; but, if we were to look at their way of life and at their circle of companions, our wonder would be that they possessed even this small portion of stale and vulgar knowledge.

Far be it from me, however, to state this as an apology, much less as an excuse, and still less as a justification, even for the neglect of any part of their high duties ; and, if I were to do this, it would be impossible for me to extend any portion of the benefit to their active misconduct. Being lawgivers, they ought fully to qualify themselves for that most important of all the offices of life. It is no justification, it is no excuse, in a poor man, that he is ignorant of the law, that he is even ignorant of the existence of the law, which condemns him to suffer death for that which he may not know to be a crime. And shall they plead ignorance, who are the very makers of the law ? Shall they find justification or excuse in any such plea. The poor tin-man in Plymouth, who tendered a bribe to the elder Addington in order to obtain a lucrative office, was so profoundly ignorant that he regarded the process, which was served upon him in order to bring him to trial for the offence as the patent or commission of the office sought for ! Yet, this poor wretch was pursued with all the rigours of the law ; was fined, imprisoned, and utterly ruined ; he was literally harrassed to death and left a starving family behind him. In demanding judgment upon this poor creature, who had seen such offices bought many times before, the viperous Percival, then attorney general, called for a heavy sentence for the sake of *public justice*, and, in vindication, as he said, of the high honour and great purity of his Majesty's government, which honour and

purity, he asserted, had never been surpassed in any age or any country ! But, behold ! in a few years afterwards out came scores of proofs of the sale and barter of offices by persons in high life, and this same Percival, who was then become Chancellor of the Exchequer, became the broad and bold defender of the whole gang of criminals. Nay, as if to twist a sheet of complete dirt and filth round the carcase of this hypocritical pretender to morality and purity, Mr. Maddocks accused him himself, while a sworn privy counsellor, and while a member of the House of Commons, at conniving at the sale of a seat in that House, and also of participating in calling upon the member of the sold seat, to vacuate that seat because his conscience would not suffer him to vote with the Ministers. Mr. Maddocks offered to produce proof of this at the bar of the House ; he made a motion to be permitted to produce that proof. The charge was made to Percival's face. He did not deny the charge, but called upon the House not to hear the evidence, *lest it should thereby give encouragement to popular encroachment*. The House voted that it could not hear the evidence ; and that too upon the ground that the practice was as notorious as the *sun at noon day*. Not a word now about "*public justice*" as in the case of the poor tin-man, who was cruelly hunted to death, in order to vindicate the honour and purity of his Majesty's Government ! Not a word about public justice here ; but, on the contrary, Lord Milton said upon that occasion, that he did not repeat either Castlereagh or Percival the less for what they had done ! I never think of Percival's name, I never hear any wretch attempting to sound his praise, without recurring to these transactions. I never think of the heavy pensions and sinecures which his whole family enjoy in consequence of his

death, without contrasting their lot with that of the widow and fatherless children of the tin-man of Plymouth ; and I most cordially joined in feeling with the people of Nottingham, when they made bonfires, and rang the bells at the news of his death. In his disposition I believe him to have had much more of the tyrant, than has the man who appears to have been selected as an object of universal execration by all Great Britain as well as Ireland, and indeed by all mankind, as far as his name has been heard of. Percival appeared to have no bounds to his malignity. He appeared to delight in persecution ; and as to his projects for enslaving the country, he actually expired in the midst of his scheme for establishing a fortified camp and barrack in the Park. This was a stretch that no man but himself ever had the audacity to talk of ; and history will tell of him, that if he had had talents equal to his malignity, he would have been capable of exterminating one half of the people, in order to insure for ever the abject subjection of the rest.

I have introduced the melancholy story of the tin-man, in order to show that *ignorance* is suffered to be no plea in excuse for the poor, and, in order to remind the Boroughmongers that they can put forward upon any future occasion no such plea. If a drunken man kill another wilfully, does his drunkenness save his life ? If a thief take a thing worth forty shillings, believing it to be worth only six-pence, does that save him from the capital punishment ? Besides, the violation of all the fundamental laws of the land ; the deliberate hiring of spies ; the attempt upon men's lives through the means of those spies ; the foul and atrocious tampering of witnesses ; the rude and cruel attacks upon the purses of the people by such troops as can be brought to assail them with cruelty : all these are

so flagrant, and so notorious, that ignorance never can be a plea to any one of those who still uphold this system.—Therefore, they must all take their chance in the same boat, or those who are not content to take that chance must fling themselves overboard, and swim back to the people.

The Noble Boroughmongers did not perceive that they were embarking with the Jenkinsons and the Ryders, the Laws and the Scotts, the Cannings and the like. They must now, however, clearly see that they have so embarked. Their new associates would, perhaps, willingly rely upon the bayonet ; but, *what a perilous state* for the Noble Boroughmongers ! I mean, those who have estates not derived from public money ; those who have estates, the purchase money of which I cannot in ten minutes trace back to the bags of the taxgatherers. It must be a perilous thing for these Noblemen who really have something which, with justice, they call their own, to place them all upon the single chance of the bayonet ; for, as to *law*, they have annihilated all law, as far as it existed for the safety of the people ; and, if they have common sense, they must perceive that they can plead no law in defence of their own persons or their own property. A man that is *outlawed*, has no law for his protection. He is left wholly defenceless ; and have not these men outlawed the whole of the people ? Have they not driven some of us to seek for safety in silence, others to seek for safety in exile ? And shall these men pretend that there are laws remaining for their protection ? They may persuade themselves, that it would be right for them to deprive the people of all the benefits of law, while they secured all the benefits of law to themselves ; but they will succeed in impressing this persuasion upon the minds of no other human beings.

Ryder and Canning, and some others of

them, had the impudence to pretend that the law of protection of person had been destroyed for the *benefit of the people themselves!* They said, that the disaffected were very few in number ; that a very very great majority of the people were most lovingly attached to a Parliament in which the trafficking in seats was as notorious as the sun at noon-day ; and that this prodigious majority of the people were extremely desirous, that the personal safety of every man in the kingdom should be taken away from him ! And the audacity of these assertions did not, however, surpass their folly. It was a prodigality in insolence, which failed not to add to the indignation of the people ; to expose the real views of corruption more clearly, and to render it utterly impossible that things should ever return to the state of 1816. What ! punish the whole of a people, because a mere handful of contemptible men, as they said we were, were conspiring against them ! The thing is so atrociously unjust, upon the bare face of it, that it never could deceive any body for a single moment. To the state of 1816, things can never return. They cannot remain in their present state, because the present state is a state of violence, which in its very nature must change by retrogading or by advancing. If it retrograde out one single step, it is destroyed. To preserve its existence, it must, like vegetables, during their growth, advance in magnitude. It must wholly cease, therefore, and the combat for Reform must be instantly renewed with innumerable additional lights, and with tenfold advantages on our side ; or a naked military despotism must speedily ensue ; if the despotism remain, or, rather, endeavour to remain in its present state, it will die, it will rot and stink in its own odiousness. The military despotism, pure and unmixed, is the only thing that

can save it for any length of time. And, as I observed before, who are the men that are to wield the bayonet ! As long as that bayonet glitters from a distance, as long as it is used merely as an object of terror ; as long as it serves merely as an adjunct to the jailer and the hangman ; so long it will have a considerable degree of power. But, to be efficient, it must at last be brought home to the people's breasts, and stained with their blood. We shall then see what will be the result. And let the Boroughmongers, as I have before warned them, recollect that this bayonet is to be wielded, and is now wielded, not by their sons, and by their miserable dependants ; not by the funders, and those who loan English taxes to the Bourbons ; not by the tenants of the Boroughmongers, who, being stuck up on horseback, and arrayed against old women and children, are dignified with the name of *Yeomanry* : by none of these is the bayonet wielded ; it is wielded by the sons and the brothers of the labouring part of the people ; those journeymen and those labourers, whose fathers, sons, and brothers have fought the battles of their country by land and by sea ; and out of whose toil and sweat came more than four-fifths of all those taxes which feed all the innumerable swarms of placemen, pensioners, grantees, poor parsons, French emigrants, funders, spies and informers. Does corruption suppose that the sons and the brothers of the journeymen and the labourers have none of the feelings of nature left within them ? She is deceived if she does. She may make it death, if she likes, even for their fathers or their brothers to love them ; but, she will never cut this love asunder so completely as to effect her purposes. I see that she *shifts them about from place to place* with infinite care and anxiety ! She does not

suffer any portion of them to remain more than a few months or weeks upon the same spot! What! is she afraid that they will fall in love with the pretty girls and get married? Is she afraid that breathing the same air for any length of time may be detrimental to their health? Is she afraid, that, like pistols remaining long unmoved in the holster, they will contract rust, and be unfit for use? What different views of things are taken under different circumstances! You know, sir, that, at the suggestion of General Wolfe, I believe it was, the English regiments of foot took the names of the several counties in England. Thus the 54th Regiment was called the West Norfolk Regiment; the 35th Regiment was called the Staffordshire, or the Warwickshire Regiment, I forget which; the 33rd Regiment was called after one of the Ridings of Yorkshire; and so on. The principles, or opinions, upon which this regulation was founded, were these: that, by confining the recruiting service for any given regiment, to a particular county you naturally had your regiment composed principally of men of that county; that men, thus collected together from within a comparatively small circle, would naturally know a great deal of each other, and that there would be existing amongst them numerous pairs of brothers, old friends and playmates; and that thus the army would become much more pleasant to the soldiers than if they had been collected promiscuously from all parts of the kingdom. It was thought, too, and with very good reason, that men, knowing that they were constantly in the presence of those who had known them all their lives, would be more careful of their conduct; and, besides, there would necessarily be, almost any week in the year, some man returning home to the county, either on furlough, or in consequence of having

been discharged, which was a channel of communication with relations and friends for the whole Regiment, or, at least, for a very great part of it. Then, when a regiment returned from abroad, and stood in need of being recruited, it was the uniform practice, as it had been the intention, to march it home to its county; where all the survivors of war or of pestilence, or of hardships of any kind, might have the happy occasion of greeting their parents, their brethren, and the friends of their youth; and where every inquiry, whether as to the property, or any other circumstances of the deceased, might be easily and conveniently made. I remember, that in our Regiment, which was the West Norfolk, when an old man was going home discharged, he took with him his knapsack full of letters into the county, and though he might not fulfil all his promises in delivering the messages of those who could not write; he would naturally fulfil many of them; and, our regiment having been frequently filled up by drafts from other regiments which went home before it, I always observed that the Norfolk men were most attached to the service and much more careful of their conduct in every respect, than the men of any other county. All the opinions; all the benevolent notions and intentions upon which these regulations were founded, seem now, not only to be out of vogue, but the very *contrary of them* appear to prevail. Look at the barracks; look at the fortresses; look at the Military academies; look at the everlasting shifting of the Regiments from post to post; look at the outlandish dresses; in short, cast your eye upon the whole, or upon any part of the thing, and you will clearly see that the grand object is totally to efface from the mind of the soldier all recollection of paternal and filial affection; to make him as insensi-

ble as the musket that he wields. If you look into the history of this change, too, you will see that it has been premeditated ; that it has long, very long, been, not only thought of, but acted upon ; and, when we hear the insolence of such men as Sidmouth and Canning ; when we hear the Jenkinsons and the Castlereaghs openly justify the employment of Spies, are we not to conclude, that these gentlemen imagine that they have brought their system of estranging the soldiers from the people to perfection ? This they do imagine ! But in this they will, at last, find themselves deceived, and, in the mean while, where shall the Noble Boroughmongers look for the means of future security ? Call it army, call it the military, call it what they will, at last, it is nothing but an assemblage of the sons and brothers of the oppressed people. This, and this only, can be their reliance on those who have deprived the people of all the benefits of law. They may shut the soldiers up as closely as they please. They may watch them by night as well as by day, they may make it death to talk to them, and make it death in them to listen to any talk. All will not do. I know soldiers as well as any man that ever breathed. I know them to be quick sighted, and to be particularly gifted at prying into any sinister caresses. What ! is it believed by these infatuated men, that the labourers and journeymen who are so intelligent in private life, lose all their intelligence the moment they become congregated in masses so admirably calculated to produce discussions of all sorts, and where a communication of sentiments inevitably produces light, at the same time that it produces vigour of mind ? If this be believed, my experience assures me that the belief is founded in the grossest of error. We had a corps of sergeants infinitely more able to

command than our corps of commissioned officers were ; and, if the due merit was given, it would be seen upon all occasions, that to the sergeants and the corporals, nine-tenths of the skill of a campaign fairly belong. Soldiers do not talk in the hearing of their commanders ; but they talk pretty freely behind their backs. There is not a fault or a foible in any of the characters of those commanders that they do not criticise. They canvass all their actions and all their motives. A body of soldiers is never imposed upon to take for true that which is false ; and, I will venture to engage, that there is not a regiment at this moment in England where the whole question of Parliamentary Reform has not been discussed and settled long and long ago. In short, journeymen and labourers, when they become soldiers, are still the same men ; and the same hardy hearts and minds that they had before, only with a great deal additional intelligence and acuteness. I perceive, that the regiment of *Scotch greys* were feasted lately in some town of England, and that the Bells were rung in honour of their arrival. And did these feasters imagine, that the soldiers of the *Scotch greys* did not know what *this was for*. Little did those feasters know ; little did they imagine what would pass in the conversations of the soldiers while they were eating their beef, and drinking their beer ! If they had known, they would have trembled in every joint of their bodies. See, then, Sir, to what a perilous state those men have reduced themselves who have flung aside the law, who have forfeited the affections of the mass of the nation, and who have placed their sole reliance on their power to cajole and deceive a very small portion of that same nation, into whose hands they have put the safe custody of their titles and estates ! Let these men reflect on

this, their situation ; and then let them boast, if they can, of their success of having crammed some of the Reformers into dungeons and driven others into exile. Mr. KNIGHT, whose good fortune appears to have prevailed on Sidmouth to send him to your county jail, and who is a very public spirited and excellent man ; Mr. KNIGHT, in his dungeon, is happier than the richest and most powerful of his persecutors. He has, at any rate, the compassion of his countrymen, the anxious good wishes of every feeling heart ; they are now covered with hatred, and they have barred the door everlastingly against the feelings of compassion.

The late DUKE of RICHMOND, who knew the soldiers as well as he knew the rest of the people, proposed, in his Bill for Parliamentary Reform, that the *soldiers should vote* as well as other men ; and we, in our scheme, proposed the same thing. The events of my life furnish me with most curious incidents, to fit almost all occasions ; but it will hardly be believed that I have seen the time when I, along with all the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of my regiment were once invited by our officers to vote at an election for members of the Legislative assembly of the state of New Brunswick. The division of the province, in which we happened to be quartered, was divided into two parties, taking the names of two little bays, which, in that country, are called *coves*. One of these coves was situated towards the higher ground of the city of St. John, and the other towards the lower ground of that city ; one of the parties took the name of the upper coves, and the other of the lower coves. The contest was very strong. The governor, the law officers of the State ; all those who called themselves the gentry ; all the numerous persons in office, such as the custom-house people, and the like. These were of the

upper cove party, and they were opposed by some clever men who were shipbuilders, merchants, who were backed by the talents of three or four independent and stirring lawyers. The upper coves had, of course, the best part of the fair play in their hands, and we were called out once or twice to witness the broken windows that their opponents had occasioned. At last it became pretty evident that the lower coves had gained the day, and, as a last resort, we were called upon to be *ready to vote*. Our officers were, of course, of the upper cove party ; but it was far different with us, who had canvassed and discussed the whole thing as amply as it had ever been discussed by the governor and his counsel. Our sergeant major (for I was then a corporal,) was set to work to sound the disposition of the men, just after the parade in the morning. It happened to me that I was that day the corporal of the governor's guard, and, therefore, I marched from the parade with my six men at the very time that the sergeant major was going upon his canvass. From our quarters to the governor's house, which was in the city, was a considerable distance. Upon my way to my station, I was met by the fort major, whose name was Hailes (and who was a lieutenant, I believe, in the 33d regiment) in company with some other person that I have now forgotten. Having stopped us, he asked me and my guard, for whom we would vote at the election, if we were called upon. I was about to ask him some question as to the oath that I had to take. In short, I did not know what answer to give ; but while I was boggling, my six grenadiers thundered out from under their great hairy caps, " For the lower coves, Sir, to be sure !" He went by without saying any thing more to us, and when he came to the fort, he doubtless learnt the result of the sergeant major's canvass,

which, as I heard, when I came off guard next morning, had been an unanimous three cheers for the lower cove. I believe Mr. Hailes is still alive. I have been told, within these few days, that Mr. JONATHAN ODELL, the governor's secretary, is still alive. There are hundreds of persons alive in the province, who were living there at that time; and I state this fact, inviting any one to contradict it if they can. I need not add, that we were not called upon to give our votes; but I will not so far presume infamy upon the memory of General Carleton, who was the governor, and who was a very wise, mild, and, indeed, a very just man in his general deportment and actions.

I will not so far presume infamy upon his memory as to suppose that the laws and constitution of the state, did not give us a *right* to vote. And, if such were the laws, and such the constitution which England had given to one of her provinces, why, I would ask, are soldiers to be denied the right of voting at elections in England? Why are those to be denied the right of voting, who give up their lives, if necessary, in defence of their country? Many *sinecure placemen*, who had no real property in the world, were permitted to vote in Middlesex against Sir Francis Burdett, solely in virtue of their sinecure places, which were deemed equivalent with freeholders. So here are these men who live upon the sweat of the people, and in virtue of that very circumstance, are to be allowed to vote for persons who are to make laws to govern that same people; while those, who encounter all the hardships and all the dangers of war, in order to defend the property, to preserve the happiness, and to uphold the renown of the country, are, unless they chanced to have some Borough privilege, to have no right to vote at all! The Duke of Richmond saw the thing in a very different light. He was for taking the votes of soldiers wherever they might be quartered. All the qualifications that he required were, that the man who voted, should have attained the age of man, and that he should be a natural born subject of the king. This, too, is what we contend for.

We say, and we prove, that all distinctions, founded on the possession of this or that sort of property; of this or that quantity of land; of that, running to the more whimsical parcelling out of the people into *householders* and *lodgers*, and the like; we say, and we prove, that all these distinctions are wholly destitute of principle; that they are capricious and silly, at the same time that they are flagrantly unjust.

Our contest is for the rights of all the people; and if the infamous proprietor of the Courier has placed the soldier "out of the pale of the constitution," we have not. We still claim him as our countrymen, entitled to all the rights and immunities that we ourselves are entitled to; and all those whom I have the honour to call my political friends, would reject with scorn, an admission into the enjoyment of any privilege, from which the soldier should be excluded. No, no, Sir, soldiers are not the poor senseless things that the proprietor of the Courier newspaper takes them for. Our heroes felt very well disposed to punish us at St. JOHN; but they must have punished us *all*, and that was a matter not so very easy of accomplishment.

We knew this as well as they did; and we laughed most heartily at their impotent anger. It was odd enough, that we should have had this unanimous feeling in favour of the popular party in the province, but we had it, and all the cats-o'-nine-tails at the command of the holy alliance, would not have rooted it out of our hearts. Again, I say, therefore, let those beware, who think that soldiers are stocks and stones.

It was my intention, Sir, to have addressed you, on this occasion, upon several other topics of great importance; but I must reserve these for some future occasion, which will be attended with this circumstance, so pleasing to me, that it will afford me another opportunity of expressing the high estimation in which I hold the qualities of your mind and your heart; and of again assuring you, that, amongst all the painful feelings which accompanied me, in leaving the shores of

England, there were very few, indeed, which surpassed that which arose from the reflection, that, for a year or two, at least, I should, in all probability, be deprived of that happiness, which I had so often enjoyed in your company, and of that instruction, which I never failed to derive from your discourse.

With confident hopes, that we shall again meet, and that we shall then have

to congratulate each other on the perfect restoration of the laws and liberties of England; and, with the most anxious wishes for your health and your happiness, I remain,

My dear Sir,

Your faithful friend, and  
most obedient servant,

Wm. COBBETT.

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